DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 378 CS 013 149

AUTHOR	Bennett, Wendy M.
TITLE	At-Risk Readers: What Intervention Programs and Research Suggest.
PUB DATE	1998-03-00
NOTE	36p.; Exit Project EDEL 625, California State University, Long Beach.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Early Intervention; Elementary Education; *High Risk Students; *Instructional Effectiveness; Literature Reviews; Mentors; *Reading Difficulties; *Reading Instruction; Reading Programs; *Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS	*California; Reading Management

ABSTRACT

The paper, on reading intervention, reviews literature and research which discuss students at risk of reading failure and/or students with mild reading disabilities. It uses as background the recommendations of the California Reading Initiative Task Force regarding the instruction of reading in the schools and the expectation that schools will develop effective reading intervention programs to serve students beginning no later than the middle of first grade. The characteristics and success rates of reading intervention programs which are currently being implemented in elementary schools are explored. The paper also focuses on researching successful school reading programs and discovering the characteristics which make reading instruction effective for at-risk students in all grades. A 22-item bibliography is attached. (NKA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 418 378

At-Risk Readers:

What Intervention Programs and Research Suggest

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

W. Bennett

Wendy M. Bennett
Cal State University, Long Beach
EDEL 625 - Dr. Lass
March 1998

CS013149

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Questions To Be Answered.....3

Definition of Terms.....4

History of Reading.....6

Issues in the Areas of Reading:
-- The California Reading Initiative.....12
-- Whole Language vs. Phonics Becomes Balanced Literacy.....13
-- Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective Readers.....14
-- Brief Description of Popular Reading Intervention Programs.....15

Synthesis and Analysis
-- Literature Surveyed.....16
-- Characteristics of Currently Successful Reading Intervention Programs in the United States.....17
-- Effective Reading Strategies for Working with At-Risk Students.....21
--Application of the Balanced Approach to Reading Within Reading Intervention.....23

Conclusions.....26

Recommendations.....29

Bibliography.....32

Introduction

The public has been informed that there is a crisis in our schools. California's test scores are falling far below the national average in many areas, including reading. As a result, the California Reading Initiative was introduced. A task force was formed to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the instruction of reading in our schools. The California Reading Task Force stated in *Every Child a Reader* that "We can no longer continue to do business as usual" (1995, pg. 14). Based on this recommendation, districts are evaluating their programs and making changes. "Reading must be the first priority of everyone who cares about children" (California Reading Task Force, 1995, pg. 14).

The focus of this paper will be the area of reading intervention. Literature and research will be reviewed which discuss students at-risk of reading failure and/or students with mild reading disabilities. The California Reading Task Force makes, as its third recommendation, the expectation for schools to develop effective reading intervention programs which serve students beginning no later than the middle of first grade.

The author, being a special day class, learning handicapped teacher of grades four through six, is interested in the characteristics and success rates of reading intervention programs which are currently implemented in elementary schools. However, since most intervention programs work with students in first grade (years younger than the author's population of students), interest will also be placed on researching successful school reading programs and the characteristics which make reading instruction effective for students at-risk in all grades.

This paper will be used as a springboard for the author to begin looking into her classroom reading instruction. It will also be used to give insight into a current mentor project in which the special day class reading programs in the author's district are being reviewed and evaluated. An attempt is being made in a year-long project to determine if a single reading program can be purchased and implemented district-wide in the special day classes.

This search for effective reading intervention in the author's district's special day classes comes in a timely manner due to the recommendations made through the California Reading Initiative and by the California Reading Task Force. The author's district began implementation of a balanced approach to reading instruction and purchased a corresponding reading curriculum for the general education classrooms last year. This implementation of a balanced approach to reading has begun trickling into the district's special education classrooms during the current school year through staff development suggestions. Therefore, the author is interested in reviewing what the literature suggests in relation to a balanced approach to reading instruction in intervention programs and as it applies to at-risk students.

Questions To Be Answered

The author of this paper will be attempting to find answers to questions related to the area of reading intervention. In order to get a broad, non-specific understanding of the issues and findings involved, the focus of this paper will include the answers to the following questions:

What are the characteristics of currently successful reading intervention programs in the United States?

Which reading strategies are suggested in the literature and research studies as being effective in working with students who are at-risk for reading difficulties or who demonstrate a disability in reading?

What practices are involved in the current push for a balanced approach to reading and how do those practices apply to the concept of reading intervention?

Definition of Terms

In order to present a clear discussion of the topic of reading intervention, certain definitions need to be discussed and clarified. The following will present terms which repeatedly occurred in the literature.

As a beginning, the term "reading" needs to be given a reference point. Debates have surfaced in the past as to whether the process of reading was simply the act of decoding words on a page or whether instead, reading was the act of deriving meaning from a text. Current discussions appear to follow the view that "reading" is a process in which the reader attempts to find meaning. As stated by Wood and Algozzine, "The current orientation is that reading is the dynamic process of constructing meaning through the interaction among the prior knowledge of the reader, the text written by the author, and the reading setting" (1994, pg. 13). For the purpose of this paper, it will be this definition of reading which will be used.

Due to the focus of this paper, the term reading intervention needs to be discussed. Intervention can be defined as preventive intervention or remediation. Preventive intervention is a way for a school system to intervene through varying avenues for the purpose of preventing a student's failure in reading. Remediation is a way for a school system to intervene through varying avenues for the purpose of remediating a student who has already demonstrated failure in reading. It should be apparent, that preventive intervention would be the reading intervention of choice as it attempts to eliminate the reading failure in the schools.

Reading intervention efforts are generally focused on a population termed "at risk." "At-risk" is the current term for low-achieving students. For the purpose of this paper, "at-risk" students would be demonstrating low achievement in the area of reading.

Since reading intervention should be closely linked to the classroom reading program, the terms "balanced literacy," "whole language," and "phonics approaches" need to be presented. Balanced literacy refers to the current recommendation for the teaching of reading suggested in *Every Child a*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reader. This method includes: a strong literature, language and comprehension program, an organized and explicit skills program (which includes phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding skills), ongoing diagnosis, and a powerful early intervention program (California Reading Task Force, 1995).

"Whole language" is, stated very simply, an approach to reading instruction which focuses on reading for meaning through a natural development of language. Students begin to read by using context clues of the text and by drawing on rich language experiences.

A "phonics approach" to reading instruction is the teaching of reading and spelling by stressing symbol to sound relationships. Its focus is on the alphabetic code of the English language.

Some relatively new, or currently popular terms, include "phonemic awareness" and the activity of "repeated readings". "Phonemic awareness" is an ability to understand that the words we hear are composed of individual sounds which we term phonemes. It is currently believed that students who do not possess phonemic awareness will most likely encounter difficulties in reading.

The activity of "repeated readings" involves developing instructional techniques which expect students to practice a text selection until they have mastered it.

A multitude of other definitions related to reading could be presented here. However, it is the author's belief that the above definitions will provide the necessary background information for the understanding of reading intervention as it is presented in this paper.

History of Reading

Reading has developed an extensive history for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, reading has been an important part of elementary school curriculum since the beginning of schools in the United States. Unlike other disciplines, reading has remained a constant curricular focus. That is not to say that the manners in which reading is taught has not changed throughout history. Second, reading has always been an important concern among educators, politicians, and the public. There has always been a constant push for literacy among people. The determination of which people should become literate and reasons behind the importance of literacy have changed throughout history.

Detailed and accurate historical accounts of reading instruction in American schools have been hard to find. The articles found in this literature search were limited in their scope. This limitation was confirmed in the introduction to Venezky's historical account of reading in 1986 which stated that attempts at full histories of reading were either out of date or slanted towards the author's opinion of best practices.

What follows will be a description of what is available through the limited historical accounts of reading instruction in public education. Information was ascertained from Pearson (1992), Russell, (1961), Shanahan and Neuman (1997) and Venezky (1986).

Throughout history there have been critics of each time period's current approach to reading instruction. The recent reading pendulum educators refer to in terms of "whole language" versus "phonics-only" has been going on since the 1800's and some traces of this debate can be detected as early as the 1700's.

Reading instruction of the colonial time period centered around the usage of hornbooks. During this time period reading instruction was dominated by theology and children were viewed as ignorant men and woman. Children were instructed through rote memorization of adult concepts. Beginning in the late 17th century the New England Primer came into publication which preached stern religious dogma. Skill interests of the 17th century included decoding,

vocabulary development, comprehension, and oral expression. Oral expression was known as elocution and included rules and instruction.

Spelling instruction of the colonial time period was directly tied to the instruction of beginning reading through the popular alphabetic approach. Students were instructed to spell each letter in a word before they read the word. Spelling instruction was introduced in Webster's spelling books and readers and remained popular for many years.

In the 1700's Samuel Heinicke criticized the prevalent spelling method of the time. Also beginning at this time, reading instruction began to see changes based on the changing perspectives of childhood. These perspectives were reflected in juvenile literature and in reading texts.

Moralism and nationalism became the themes in education from 1776 to 1840. In 1837, the McGuffey Reader's were first published. The first McGuffey Reader utilized a whole-word approach, but by the first revision its perspective returned to the alphabetic method of reading instruction. The McGuffey Readers brought improvement to the teaching of reading through the limitation of new words introduced on each page and with the repetition of new vocabulary. Another improvement was in the theorized elimination of spelling words as a preliminary step to reading. However, even in an 1867 McGuffey Reader, the instructions to the teacher were for the child to spell each word in the line, and then read the line.

Serious debates over reading instruction methods began in the 1820's and by the 1840's constant criticism of reading instruction began.

The period from 1840 to 1880 focused on the theme of intelligent citizenship. By this time the perspective of childhood was that children were undeveloped beings. By 1842, juvenile readers began being published which included examples of right living with humorous twists. Attitudes and teaching methods began to change based on the changing perspective of childhood. Children's literature slowly progressed from religious and moral lessons towards selections of fantasy, fun and entertainment.

In 1842 and 1844 Horace Mann presented reports to the Board of Education in Massachusetts which denounced the sole usage of the

alphabetic-spelling method of drills to teach reading. He stressed that reading instruction should involve meaningful, active learning which was based on familiar objects and activities. He favored the whole word method of initiating reading instruction, but he also favored the teaching of phonics. His criticism was of the current-day alphabetic method of drills and focus on nonsense syllables. Interpretations of his reports in later times incorrectly reduced Mann's reform to an advocacy for the whole-word method of reading instruction and a removal of phonics instruction.

The first textbook to suggest a shift away from the alphabetic approach came in 1826 in textbooks published by Worcester. It suggested teaching words as whole units as a beginning activity prior to analyzing and naming their letters. In 1860, Wells suggested that the names of letters be introduced only after the whole words were learned. And by 1862, textbooks advocated the word or look-say approach to beginning reading which eliminated sound analysis of words.

During the 19th century, America was still a bookless society, in that books were generally owned only by wealthy people. The only print read by children were selections found in their textbooks. After 1860, children's literature became an important portion of the publishing business. Supplementary readers became available and adventure and fantasy stories became popular.

The theme of cultural development became prevalent in education during the period of 1880 to 1910. It was during this period that the emphasis of silent reading over oral reading occurred. In 1880, records show that research suggested silent reading be the main goal to reading instruction. By 1925, silent reading was strongly emphasized. Prior to this change, instruction had revolved around making students fluent oral readers. It is believed that this shift went along with the standardized test movements and the new emphasis on meaning and comprehension even though standardized tests weren't widespread until 1918. With this change in emphasis, literature became the emphasis. Selections in reading texts became longer.

By the end of the 19th century, the importance of gaining meaning from print was more frequently mentioned and by the early 20th century (along with

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the standardized testing movement) independent reading for meaning and the development of comprehension skills became stressed. A 1917 study by Thorndike investigated errors in paragraph comprehensions and demonstrated the difference between simply mouthing words and understanding the meaning of the text. He demonstrated the need for instruction in obtaining meaning from text. Comprehension has been included as a developed skill since colonial times, however, it has been suggested that limited focus was placed on this skill due to the emphasis on oral expression.

In 1927, the first major investigations of research on diagnostic and remedial activities were conducted by Gates. Reading disabilities began to be defined and reasons for low achievement in reading were starting to be investigated.

In the early 1900's, more agreement was being reached in terms of how reading instruction should progress. By the 1930's the reading instruction arguments became motionless for twenty years. The basal reader was the primary method for teaching students to read. Students were expected to memorize words and discover them through context clues of the stories. Phonics was used only as a back-up word identification strategy.

The theme of scientific investigation was prevalent in education from 1910 to 1965. During this time, study skills became an added popular skill interest. The skills of decoding, vocabulary development, and comprehension had continued to be important skills since colonial times. The skill of oral expression had fallen out of importance towards the late 1800's. Beginning in 1920 content area reading became an interest which led to the need for skills for dealing with this type of text. By 1940, the first reading texts emphasizing content-area reading skills were published.

In 1935 Gray and Leary published the first formula for measuring the level of difficulty of printed material. In 1955 Rudolf Flesch published *Why Johnny Can't Read* which attacked the basal approach to reading and insisted on the return to a phonics method as being the only way for students to become successful readers. By the 1960's the whole word versus phonics debate was in full swing.

The late 1960's saw the introduction of the first-grade studies which

reviewed the current practices across the United States in the instruction of beginning reading. Since these studies, there has been an abundance of literature focusing on beginning reading methods.

Beginning in 1960, the following changes have occurred in reading instruction. In 1965, Goodman introduced information which became central to the whole language movement of introducing word recognition in context as opposed to in isolation. Since the 1960's, literacy has been taught at an earlier age and extends to later ages. Kindergarten readiness activities have been replaced with reading instruction. The use of ability groupings decreased, but has recently been suggested as effective. Remedial reading programs have increased in number and emphasis. Elementary reading instruction has become an eclectic type of instruction. Worksheets became popular and then declined in usage. Students are encouraged to self-select reading material and reading comprehension instruction has increased. Parents are encouraged to read with their children and assessment is becoming more and more popular. Basal texts are used less frequently, whereas trade books which reflect diversity are used more frequently (Shanahan& Neuman, 1997).

Research in the 1980's documented the following findings and trends. Reading began being studied by scholars representing many disciplines outside of the educational field. Reading became a process directly linked to writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. Integration of instruction was assumed by the end of the 1980's. Readers became viewed as builders, or meaning constructors in which it is viewed that each new text encountered is understood in relation to the text encountered previously. Readers are also viewed as fixers who select from sets of strategies to comprehend encountered texts. Goodman's whole language philosophies became practice in elementary schools and then became debated once again by the end of the decade.

The 1990's have seen the whole language versus phonics debate result in the balanced literacy approach to reading instruction. Phonemic awareness became a frequently researched skill. California implemented its reading initiative and strong recommendations for balanced approaches in reading, the use of assessment in instruction and early intervention programs are made.

In conclusion, reading has had a varied and rapidly shifting history. No other area of the curriculum has so constantly being subjected to such intense controversy over its methods and content. This is due to its vulnerability to outside pressure and the wide range of social, cultural, economic, and educational influences.

Issues in the Areas of Reading

The California Reading Initiative

The current issues in the areas of reading and reading intervention are focused, in the state of California, on the current Reading Initiative. The California Reading Initiative is a federally -funded, one billion dollar program designed to reform reading instruction in California schools to make it successful for almost every child. As a first step, the California Reading Task Force was created. One result of this task force was the 1995 publication, *Every Child a Reader,* which stated the task force's conclusion that the California 1987 English-Language Arts Framework did not present a balanced reading program which afforded enough attention on explicit skills instruction to make every child successful (California Reading Task Force, 1995).

As a result of the California Reading Task Force's initial conclusions, *Teaching Reading: A Balanced, Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Reading in Prekindergarten Through Grade Three* was published by the California Department of Education in 1996. The development of this publication focused on raising California's poor reading scores by utilizing the existing research base which explains topics such as how children become readers, the differences between effective and ineffective readers, and strategies for minimizing reading failure.

This publication began a state-wide push for the development and implementation of reading programs which utilize the balanced approach to teaching reading which includes the use of quality literature, systematic skills instruction, programmed assessment, and an early intervention component.

The California Reading Initiative has recommended and provided incentives for districts to begin implementation of the six components of the initiative. These components include: reducing class size, adopting core reading instructional materials, providing inservice training in the area of balanced instruction, preparing new teachers with knowledge of successful research-based instructional practices, providing high quality reading material for all students, and developing leadership training.

Whole Language vs. Phonics Becomes Balanced Literacy

As discussed in the historical section of this paper, the debate over a curricular focus in skills instruction versus a focus in instruction through whole words or pieces of literature has been around for many, many years. In recent history, the focus in skills instruction has been termed the phonics approach. The phonics approach has been viewed as a "drill and kill" approach in which skills are taught out of context in boring manners with little attention awarded to meaningful instruction. As a result of this viewpoint, whole language emerged as a philosophy. The whole language approach then became viewed as the approach in which students never received skill instruction, but were expected to learn to read by focusing on language and meaning.

Advocates and critics arose for both sides of this reading pendulum. Arguments were made for a strong need for students to receive skills instruction so that all children could become readers. Rebuttals were made for the belief that reading for meaning and using context clues allowed students to naturally develop into readers.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's when whole language was the general curricular practice in elementary classrooms, agreement began to be reached that there is a "general value of at least some knowledge of phonics" (Shefelbine, 1995). Critics began seeing that phonics instruction was being included in meaningful ways within successful language experience and whole language classrooms. At this time research began documenting the successes of literature programs, skills instruction, and the importance of developing phonemic awareness in readers.

As a result, the term "balanced literacy" became popular. The state of California recommended this approach in their reading initiative, publishing companies began developing programs to teach the areas of reading in a balanced manner, and school districts began implementing and inservicing their staff. As a result, it appears as if the whole language/phonics arguments have been quieted for the time being under "balanced literacy."

Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective Readers

One of the components reviewed by the California Reading Task Force was the abundance of research documenting what makes a reader effective as opposed to ineffective. An overview on this topic of the information found throughout the literature reviewed in this paper has been included due to its relevancy in the development of reading intervention programs.

Studies conducted on beginning readers have discovered that reading acquisition occurs within three stages. The first is the selective-cue stage in which attention is given to context. The second is the spelling-sound stage in which phonic skills and phonemic awareness become important. The final stage is that of automaticity in which a reader becomes fluent. Effective readers are able to easily progress through these stages of acquisition through skills that they develop. Some of these skills include: an awareness of print, the ability to recognize the shapes of letters, knowledge of the sounds of letters, the association of letters with words, decoding and word recognition skills, the ability to identify words in print accurately and easily, knowledge of spelling patterns, and the ability to comprehend language (Council for Exceptional Children, 1995).

In contrast, ineffective (or at-risk) readers are unable to develop these skills for a variety of reasons which may include: environmental factors, lack of quality reading experiences, ineffective reading instruction, and/or language, memory or processing deficits. At-risk readers have limited development of cognitive ability to use the reading process, few reading strategies to help them process information in a literate manner, a lack of understanding of the purpose of the reading process, and/or a belief that they cannot read text material (Lowe, Lowe, Wood, Algozzine, 1992).

The majority of poor readers show an inability to understand the alphabetic code of the English language and end up relying heavily on the context of the material as their decoding strategy (Felton, 1993; Shefelbine, 1995). It is very common for poor readers to have difficulties with phonological awareness skills either in areas of segmenting the different sounds in words, encoding sounds into words, or retrieving phonological information from memory (Felton, 1993). In addition, poor readers encounter experiences with slow and effortful reading

which impacts their word recognition and impairs their comprehension. As a result, they encounter less text than an effective reader, receive smaller amounts of practice in reading, and often demonstrate lower motivation towards reading (Mathes, Simmons, 1992).

It has been documented that early effective readers are more successful in school and become less likely to drop out of high school (Cronan, Walen, 1995). This makes the importance of providing instruction so that all students can be successful in reading of great concern. Many researchers have held the position that a major cause of reading disability is not in a shortcoming within the child, but in the inadequate instruction that child has received (Felton, 1993). With that in mind, educators need to take the responsibility for developing programs to reach every student. Reading intervention programs play a large role in that.

Brief Description of Popular Reading Intervention Programs

A more indepth description of reading intervention programs will occur in the Synthesis and Analysis section of this paper where the research question of what characteristics are found in successful reading intervention programs will be answered. What follows is a brief description of a few popular intervention programs which have been documented in the research.

Reading Recovery is a one-on-one tutoring program provided by a certified instructor which was brought to the United States by Clay in 1985. Reading Recovery is a daily, structured, thirty minute pull-out program for struggling first grade readers.

Success for All is a whole school reading program provided by the entire school staff which was developed at John Hopkin's University by Slaven. Success for All targets prekindergarten through third grade in a 90-minute reading period in which students are grouped across grades by reading level.

Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) is a supplementary reading program provided by the classroom teacher which has been implemented in the state of Minnesota. EIR consists of an additional twenty minutes of structured reading instruction for the five to seven lowest achieving students in each first grade classroom.

Synthesis and Analysis

Literature Surveyed

This portion of the literature review combines information from a major portion of the bibliography. The intent was to combine as much information as applicable to find multiple answers to the questions proposed in the beginning of this paper as opposed to finding one single research-based answer.

Two books were reviewed for portions of this section--each containing a focus on what the research says in relation to the topic. One book was on remedial reading and addressed the current programs in practice. The other was written by two researchers from the field and focused on applying the current reading research to high-risk learners.

Seven articles documenting actual research studies were used to draw information from. Four of the seven involved research conducted on specific programs being implemented to improve reading instruction. One described the Project PRIMER program which is used to help families begin developing literacy at early ages. Another studied the reading intervention program at Webster Magnet School in the midwestern United States while another demonstrated the results of the Kenneth McCarthy Basic Beginning Reading Program in East Palo Alto, California. The final study documented the research related to the Success for All intervention program.

Research studies were also found which documented the usage of various reading techniques or methods for instruction. Both addressed the use of integrated language instruction through the use of literature. The final research study documented results from the First Grade Studies conducted throughout the United States in the 1960's.

The remaining articles referred to other research studies as they presented and discussed topics related to this area of interest. They evaluated effective intervention programs, described reading programs at nationally recognized schools, discussed techniques for developing reading fluency, evaluated the use of whole language, phonics, and phonemic awareness with at-risk learners, and described components of effective programs. Finally, The California Reading

Task Force's recommendations presented in *Every Child a Reader* were incorporated where appropriate.

What follows will be a discussion of what information was found in the literature and research related to each of the questions addressed in this paper. Those questions being: finding the characteristics of successful reading intervention programs, describing the research-based, effective strategies for working with at-risk readers, and discussing which practices of the balanced approach to reading relate to reading intervention.

Characteristics of Currently Successful Reading Intervention Programs in the United States

The literature studied described nine different reading intervention programs. Two of these programs: Reading Recovery and Success for All, are the most commonly known. Others are currently being used in limited areas of the United States, confined to a single research study or in a single school. Mentioned, but not discussed much, are the widely used, yet greatly diverse programs such as Chapter One pull-out tutoring, the use of peer or cross-age tutors, and computer-based programs.

Due to the varying factors involved with students being unsuccessful in reading, effective programs are difficult to create which will address the needs of all at-risk students. The programs which are successful appear to be the ones which utilize flexible approaches.

Reading Recovery has been the mostly widely utilized, researched and described program for early intervention. It was adapted by Clay for the United States in the 1980's. The original Reading Recovery program originated in New Zealand schools. The program begins with an intensive training period for teachers who become certified to teach Reading Recovery. When the program is in place, at-risk first grade students are pulled out of the classroom for daily thirty minute tutoring sessions. Each tutoring session involves a very structured set of tasks which include: reading familiar stories, the teacher taking a running record on the reading of the previous day's story, working with letters, story dictation and activities, exploring a new book in depth, reviewing the language of the new

book, developing vocabulary for the new book, and finally reading the new book. First grade students are in the program for a specified amount of time and are then exited (Pikulski, 1994; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

The Reading Recovery program is used in first grade programs throughout the United States and has been documented in research studies as resulting in impressive learning levels. However, recent research in 1994 and 1995 is beginning to show the lack of retained skills as students progress to future grades (Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

A second program, Success for All, developed by Slavin at John Hopkin's University is becoming well known, but has mainly been used in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Success for All is a school-wide restructuring program whose focus is on the reading instruction of students in prekindergarten to third grade. It's philosophies are that every child can learn to read if the staff improves its reading instruction and classroom management, if excellent early learning opportunities are provided, if assessment is utilized to plan for instruction, and if one-on-one tutoring is available for struggling students before they fall through the cracks (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Wasik, Ross, Smith, & Dianda, 1996).

The Success for All program involves daily 90-minute reading periods in which students are regrouped according to abilities across grade levels resulting in homogeneous reading groups of fifteen to twenty students. The students receive whole-group direct instruction emphasizing language skills and sound blending. Phonetically regular mini-books are used in cooperative learning and writing activities. Students are expected to read a student-chosen book for twenty minutes at home on a daily basis. Students are assessed every eight weeks to monitor progress. Those students who are falling behind receive an additional twenty minutes of individual tutoring sessions.

Little research is available on the Success for All program, however, what is available shows impressive results in success for all elementary level students (Pikulski, 1994; Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Wasik, Ross, Smith & Dianda, 1996).

The Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) program is being used in schools in the state of Minnesota. EIR is a first-grade program delivered by the regular classroom teacher as supplemental instruction to those students falling behind.

The five to seven lowest students in each first-grade classroom are given an additional twenty minutes of reading instruction plus five minutes with an instructional assistant. The twenty minutes of instruction involves repeated readings, phonemic segmentation, blending activities, and word recognition activities (Pikulski, 1994).

Project PRIMER was a multi-year project involving over one hundred families. The project was titled PRoducing Infant/Mother Ethnic Readers and involved pairing trained college students with low-income parents to encourage and enable parents to read effectively to their children. The program worked mainly with Head Start parents and demonstrated effectiveness (Cronan, & Walen, 1995).

The Winston-Salem Project has been implemented in two schools in North Carolina. It began as a first-grade program in which classroom instruction was reorganized. Students are heterogeneously grouped with five to six students per group. Students are involved in reading related activities for three hours and fifteen minutes every day. They are instructed in four thirty minute blocks which include: a basal reader block, a writing block involving five to ten minute minilessons and independent writing activities, a working with words block, and a self-selected reading block. After the first year of implementation, the participating teachers looped with their current students into their second grade year beginning the program as a 1st and 2nd grade program (Pikulski, 1994).

The Boulder Project has been implemented in two schools and utilizes Chapter one teachers. Students identified for chapter one services are placed into groups of three students and receive pull-out instruction for daily thirty-minute remedial instruction from either the Chapter one teacher or an instructional assistant. Activities include: repeated readings of predictable stories, word identification skills, writing words, and writing on topics of their choice (Pikulski, 1994).

A second-grade enrichment project was implemented and researched at the Webster Magnet School in the midwestern United States. It involved a daily 45-minute enrichment program that lasted for seven weeks. It involved three day cycles of choral and repeated readings, skills coaching, partner reading,

sentence writing, independent reading, and a cross-age tutoring program with extensively trained fourth grade students. This program proved most effective when second grade students entered the program in the fall and when they also received the cross-age tutoring portion of the program (Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

The Kenneth McCarthy Basic Beginning Reading Program was implemented in schools in East Palo Alto, California and demonstrated success in working with minority and learning disabled students. The program implements McCarthy's Eclectic Beginning Reading System which utilizes a combination of teaching techniques used throughout the 16th through the 19th centuries. The philosophy behind the program is the belief that the flawed reading methods implemented in elementary schools beginning in the 1930's were the reason for failing students and the belief that all reading problems are preventable. This systematic delivery of basic skills demonstrated effectiveness with the specific population of students in East Palo Alto, California (McCarthy, 1995).

When a comparison was made of the above programs, the following was noted. Three of the programs used a one-on-one tutoring approach for at least a portion of their instruction and six used a group approach. Four of the programs focused attention on improving the classroom reading instruction. Two used basal readers, two used phonetically regular books, and three used literature organized by reading levels. Two programs used regular assessment techniques. Five of the programs involved students in multiple grades, where-as only two focused on first grade students only.

In terms of reading instruction approaches, six of the programs use repeated readings, two specifically mentioned vocabulary activities, five included writing activities, three developed phonemic awareness, and five involved word recognition. Only one program mentioned a detailed cross-age tutoring program, however, that program documented results of their program with and without the tutoring element. Students included in the program with the tutoring element achieved at a much higher level than those in the program without the tutoring element.

Effective Reading Strategies for Working with At-Risk Students

A discussion of the findings for this question will begin with a review of relevant information found in response to the previous question. Those results suggest the following strategies as being effective: repeated readings, reading for meaning balanced with explicit skills instruction, using writing as a means to read, and the use of predictable or patterned stories.

Pikulski stated in his 1994 article that there is a growing amount of research that presents evidence suggesting "that reading failure is preventable for all but a very small percentage of children" (pg. 30). The researchers behind this belief are growing in number, but include Clay, Cunningham, Hiebert, Colt, Catto, Gury, Taylor, Pinnell, Reynolds, Slaven, Madden, Karweit, Dolan, Wasik, Taylor, Frye, Short, Shearer, and Medo. With this evidence, many articles and research studies have been developed to document and attempt to explain those strategies and approaches which will make an impact for students who are not succeeding with current reading practices.

Reading programs can be successful at any level, however, the earlier effective techniques are implemented and intervention is available, the more successful the following strategies will be (Felton, 1993). Clay emphasized in 1985 that the first essential to any early intervention reading program is a good reading instructional program in the classrooms (as recorded in Pilukski, 1994). Therefore, the strategies which will be discussed are documented as being successful for at-risk readers. The setting these strategies are delivered in--be it a remedial program or in the general education reading program--should be similar in success levels.

The effective strategies to be discussed include: repeated readings, direct instruction of reading skills, using writing as a means to develop reading skills, a literature-based instruction program, and the use of one-on-one tutoring.

Documented repeatedly is the technique of repeated readings for struggling readers. This approach builds word recognition rate, accuracy, fluency, reading comprehension, and motivation. Repeated readings allows for intensive amounts of practice in reading and generally results in optimum comprehension following the third reading. Repeated readings can be

accomplished in a one-on-one setting, through paired readings, with a cross-age or peer tutor, or through choral readings. The greatest gains through repeated readings are shown by those demonstrating the lowest reading abilities (California Reading Task Force, 1995; Felton, 1998; Mathes, & Simmons, 1992; Pikulski, 1994; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

Crucial for struggling readers is the inclusion of quality, systematic, direct instruction of reading skills. This instruction should focus on words, letters, phonemic awareness, phonics, and word patterns. These skills can also include strategies for reading for meaning, becoming independent readers, and self-monitoring. Direct instruction in phonics, or the alphabetic code, has been emphasized recently. Recommendations include presenting these skills in the context of meaningful reading materials, introducing regularities first, and providing structured and systematic lessons. Instruction in phonemic awareness is a relatively new suggestion being made in the schools, however, it is estimated that twenty percent of struggling readers will have difficulty with this area of reading. Therefore, instruction in language analysis; such as, rhyming, recognizing sounds in words, and pulling apart or changing sounds in words should be included in skill instruction (Council for Exceptional Children, 1995; Felton, 1993; Pikulski, 1994; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

Writing instruction is often overlooked for at-risk or struggling readers, however, many researchers stress the use of writing as a means for developing better reading ability. They stress that the process of writing helps students to hear sounds, focus on letter order, understand sound-letter sequences, and develop fluency with high frequency words. Researchers have documented the relationship between spelling and writing. Suggestions are made for daily, brief mini-lessons in writing followed by time for independent writing (Felton, 1993; Pikulski, 1994; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

Two of the research studies documented the benefits of utilizing literature-based instruction and many of the other pieces of literature emphasized the importance of the usage of literature. Two reasons for a literature-based program are a resulting increase in students' reading abilities--specifically in the areas of vocabulary development and

comprehension--and increased student motivation. In addition, wherever skills instruction was emphasized for at-risk students it was suggested the instruction occur during use of quality literature. (Bartley, 1993; Council for Exceptional Children, 1995; Felton, 1993; Pikulski, 1994; Smith, 1993; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

Frequently documented is the usage of one-on-one tutoring as an effective means of remediating reading difficulties. This allows struggling readers to receive more quality instructional time which has been documented as a necessary factor in remediating their limited abilities. The difficulties with this approach are in the limited number of students which can be served and the expense of resulting programs. One solution to this difficulty is in initially placing all students in small group instruction (no more than five students per group). At least some of the struggling readers will make progress in the small group setting. Those who do not can then be pulled into a one-on-one tutoring program. Another solution is to develop programs for trained, cross-age peer tutors which has resulted in great success. The benefits of this program are felt by both the at-risk younger student AND by the older peer tutor (California Reading Task Force, 1995; Pikulski, 1994; Mathes & Simmons, 1992; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts, 1997).

Application of the Balanced Approach to Reading within Reading Intervention

The answers to this question have been answered to some degree in the previous two sections. Particularly in the search for effective reading strategies for at-risk students, it became clear that at-risk students especially need a balanced approach to reading instruction including the usage of quality literature, reading for meaning, explicit skills instruction, and the development of phonemic awareness. What will follow will be any additional information which was found in this literature review which will be of benefit to the understanding of this topic.

The balanced approach to reading incorporates many of the practices developed in the whole language movement. One article in 1992 described the benefits of the whole language practices for at-risk readers (Lowe, Lowe, Wood

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

& Algozzine, 1992). The whole language strategies which produce benefits for at-risk readers and are also specific practices in the balanced approach to reading are: teacher modeling of literature, opportunities for writing and reading what they have written, choice of independent reading materials and writing topics, encouragement of invented spelling in writing, and large amounts of opportunities to be engaged with texts. Practices in the whole language approach were also documented as being successful towards improving the reading comprehension abilities in the 1993 study by Bartley.

The balanced approach to reading also incorporates many of the practices that have been used in phonic-based reading programs. A 1995 article by Shefelbine presented strategies for successfully delivering phonics instruction to beginning readers. It was emphasized that the teaching of phonics should be systematic, explicit, developmental, and brief, but should not overshadow meaning-based experiences with text. In other words, phonics instruction should not be a series of isolated worksheets, but should be incorporated into experiences with the listening to and reading of quality literature and writing for a variety of purposes. Phonic instruction should involve the direct instruction of letter sounds, spelling-sound relationships, and blending.

Included in the skills portion of a balanced reading approach is the new focus on developing phonemic awareness. Many articles made mention of the research base behind its importance and especially in its place for at-risk students. The Council for Exceptional Children published an article in 1995 which stressed this crucial area of development in beginning readers. The article pointed out that those students who do not develop phonemic awareness have been proven by research as not becoming successful readers. When combined with phonics skills instruction both areas of instruction become more effective.

Another documented practice in the balanced approach to reading instruction involves the use of assessment for monitoring progress and planning future lessons. Some of the assessments mentioned in the literature include: The Wide Range Achievement Tests, The Picture Peabody Vocabulary Test, The Gray Oral Reading Test, The Diagnostic Reading Scales, The McCarthy Developmental Oral Reading and Word Articulation Tests, and The Test of Phonological

Awareness. In addition, teachers and districts have developed their own methods of assessment involving the use of word lists and running records of oral reading.

The use of a balance between reading for meaning and skills instruction allows for students to access the three reading cues for effective decoding of text. The semantic and syntactic cues are developed through reading for meaning and developing language skills. The graphophonic cues are developed through the phonics and phonemic awareness. Giving at-risk students more skills for accessing all three reading cues will bring them closer and closer to success. The balanced approach to reading attempts to do just that.

Conclusions

The author began this literature review searching for a way to justify her district's search for a perfect remedial program to address the needs of all students and to back that justification up with research. Through this literature review, the author concludes that too many factors are involved for anyone to find or even create the perfect reading program which would address all struggling readers' needs. In addition, a strong indicator of a successful program is the teacher's interest and commitment to the current program being used.

After reviewing common characteristics of currently successful reading intervention programs, the author has concluded that a variety of approaches can be successful, however, many of the programs include common elements. The most important factor seems to be that of "early" intervention. There is little evidence available to suggest that programs begun after the second grade can become successful (Pikulski, 1994). However, programs, such as Reading Recovery, which focus intensive attention on first grade students only are beginning to be documented as not being enough. Programs beginning in first grade or earlier and continuing across the primary grades appear to be more appropriate.

Programs which utilize the entire staff and focus on improving classroom reading instruction as well as providing additional, structured tutoring make sense to the author. These programs will reach more students than pull-out programs and fit with research stating that all but a few children can learn to read if instructed effectively in their regular classroom.

Characteristics in common among the successful programs include a balance between reading for meaning and systematic word identification and decoding skills instruction. Successful programs include systematic and regular assessment in various ways to monitor progress and plan for future instruction. Successful programs utilize motivating, quality literature, but at the same time utilize texts with phonetically regular words or patterned stories. All successful programs expect reading to occur at home as well as in the classroom and the most common reading instructional method appeared to be repeated readings.

After reviewing the effective reading intervention programs, the author believes programs should be developed which attempt to reach all students with a balanced approach to reading for meaning and the development of reading skills through direct instruction utilizing literature and patterned stories experienced through repeated readings. Flexibility in approaches and delivery methods seem to be the key to reaching all students.

Research was also reviewed for successful strategies used with at-risk readers which were not necessarily utilized in reading intervention programs. The significance of this question became apparent as many of the research articles stressed the belief that all but a very few number of students can be taught to read. The failure of those, other than the few who present specific inabilities, who do not develop literacy is stated as being a result of a failure in the system of reading instruction. The California Reading Task Force recommends an improvement in classroom reading instruction and the development of an early intervention program for those who are still struggling.

Most importantly, at-risk readers seem to need increased quality instructional time. This has been suggested as being implemented through repeated readings, encouraged practice at home, and one-on-one tutoring. These practices are most effective when begun at least by first grade, but should continue as long as needed.

At-risk readers need a balanced approach to reading instruction. They should receive opportunities to enjoy quality literature. They must also receive daily instruction in reading skills to foster phonemic awareness, decoding abilities, and word recognition and daily instruction in writing. On-going assessment should be involved to monitor progress and plan future instruction. Daily material should be provided for students to continue reading at home.

The California Reading Task Force recommends that a balanced approach to reading instruction must have reading for meaning through a strong literature, language, and comprehension program; organized, specific skills instruction which includes phonemic awareness and phonics-based skills; ongoing assessment and diagnosis; and an effective early intervention program. (California Reading Task Force, 1995). It is a refreshing understanding that this

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

task force has not only suggested the implementation of strategies which have proven throughout this literature review as being beneficial, appropriate, and essential for all students to be successful in reading, but that an emphasis is being placed on intervening as early as possible to stop students' illiteracy.

Teachers must draw on their own good judgment to avoid the "feast-or-famine" approach to reading approaches. At the present time, a balanced approach to reading instruction appears to be important for success. This would make sense--a balance in all areas of life seems to produce health, success, and enjoyment.

Recommendations

The author can make many recommendations based on information found as a result of this literature search. Being an educator of learning handicapped students, the author is concerned with the levels of illiteracy found in her classroom and the general education classrooms of her district. This illiteracy is discouraging to the author in terms of her own reading instructional practices and those practiced by other teachers in her district due to the belief by most researchers that all but a few children can be taught to read. The author feels there are a wide variety of factors impacting her district's and similar districts' reading achievement in the state of California, however, developing competent readers regardless of these factors should be the number one priority.

The author is encouraged especially by the publication *Every Child a Reader* by the California Reading Task Force (1995). It is the first publication the author has read since beginning her teaching career in the 1980's which provides means for her students--those with learning disabilities--to be successful. The author agrees with the recommendations listed in the publication and will list them here as recommendations for teacher's and the public to support and embrace. The recommendations are to: implement a balanced reading program, utilize diagnostic tools to monitor and modify instruction, develop an effective early intervention reading program, establish clear standards in reading and implement a corresponding assessment system, supply high quality print and electronic instructional materials, make reading a priority in the elementary grades, and work together as a community to ensure literacy for all students.

In response to these recommendations, the author encourages the public to become involved with school reading programs, offer their assistance when available, and encourage and practice extensive reading with children.

The author encourages the California government to continue viewing reading instruction as a priority. Continued funding to the schools will be necessary along with time for change and appropriate practices to be implemented. Most importantly, members of educational departments and reading task forces need to visit the schools and learn from teachers' concerns,

suggestions and success stories.

The author encourages districts to provide relevant and effective staff development in the areas of current research findings along with time for teachers to plan for the implementation of these new approaches. The districts need to support teachers in the implementation of the recommendations laid out in *Every Child a Reader* through visiting the classrooms and allowing teachers a voice in policy changes and the development of standards, assessments and instructional materials and strategies.

The author encourages schools to utilize staff to the maximum efficiency. Support staff could be used to assist and intervene with at-risk students prior to referring them to special educational services. The schools need to look into effective remedial programs and determine which components of the different programs would be effective for them.

The author encourages teachers to research and make educated decisions upon the balanced approach to reading. Each instructor needs to choose areas to improve their curriculum in meeting the needs of all students. Teachers need to push for assistance with students who are struggling with reading as soon as possible.

The author encourages those teaching reading to implement balanced approaches to reading. Quality literature should be used to provide motivation, rich language experiences, and student motivation. Structured skills instruction should address the needs of the students within the context of literature and should include attention to phonemic awareness. Assessment should be completed to monitor and modify instruction where necessary.

The author encourages teachers of special day class students to make reading the priority in instruction. The curriculum should be analyzed for quality instruction with ample amounts of time for all students to be engaged in ability-appropriate reading activities. The use of a variety of techniques and strategies should be available and utilized to reach each struggling students needs. Where available, general education students should be utilized to provide additional reading experiences for these students.

The author makes the following recommendation for herself: to analyze

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

her current reading program and implement the techniques of balanced literacy which are not currently being practiced; to utilize assessment information to modify instruction as needed; to develop maximum effectiveness from instructional assistants, and to develop a program for cross-age tutoring with her students.

The state of California is on its way to improved reading instruction. The belief that every child can be taught to read should be a central theme to placing reading instruction as the number one priority in elementary schools. Developing effective classroom strategies, and an effective early intervention program will hopefully show success and improve the public's perceptions of California public schools.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Bibliography

* An asterisk indicates literature which is based on research.

* Bartley, N. (1993). Literature-based integrated language instruction and the language-deficient student. *Reading Research and Instruction.* 32(2), 31-37.

California Reading Task Force. (1995). *Every Child a Reader.* Sacramento: California Department of Education.

* Council for Exceptional Children. (1995). Research shows phonological awareness key to reading success. *CEC Today.* 2(4), 1, 9, 15.

* Cronan, T. & Walen, H. (1995). The development of Project PRIMER: A community-based literacy program. *Reading Research and Instruction.* 35(1), 37-47.

* Felton, R. (1993). Effects of instruction on the decoding skills of children with phonological-processing problems. *Journal of Learning Disabilities.* 26(9), 583-589.

Fowler, D. (1998). What's Dot's secret? *NEA Today.* 16(5).

* Graves, M. & Dykstra, R. (1997). Contextualizing the first-grade studies: What is the best way to teach children to read? *Reading Research Quarterly.* 32(4), 342-344.

Kletzien, S. (1996). Reading programs in nationally recognized elementary schools. *Reading Research and Instruction.* 35(3), 260-274.

Lowe, D., Lowe, S., Wood, K., & Algozzine, B. (1992). Whole language for at-risk readers. *Preventing School Failure.* 37(1), 14-18.

Mathes, P. & Simmons, D. (1992). Assisted reading techniques for developing reading fluency. *Reading Research and Instruction.* 31(4), 70-77.

* McCarthy, K. (1995). The experimental basic beginning reading program at Costano School in East Palo Alto, California. *Reading Improvement.* 32(1), 13-20.

* Pearson, P.D. (1992). Reading. In Alkin, M. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of educational research* (6th ed., pp. 1075-1085). New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.

Pikulski, J. (1994). Preventing reading failure: A review of five effective programs. *The Reading Teacher*. 48(1), 30-39.

* Russell, D. (1961). Reading research that makes a difference. *Elementary English*. 38(2), 74-78.

* Shanahan, T. & Neuman, S. (1997). Literacy research that makes a difference. *Reading Research Quarterly*. 32(2), 202-210.

Shefelbine, J. (1995). Learning & using phonics in beginning reading. *Thrust for Educational Leadership*. 8-11.

* Slavin, R., Madden, N., Dolan, L., Wasik, B., Ross, S., Smith, L., & Dianda, M. (1996). Success for all: A summary of research. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*. 1(1), 41-76.

* Smith, J. (1993). Content learning: A third reason for using literature in teaching reading. *Reading Research and Instruction*. 32(3), 64-71.

* Taylor, B., Hanson, B., Justice-Swanson, K., & Watts, S. (1997). Helping struggling readers: Linking small-group intervention with cross-age tutoring. *The Reading Teacher*. 51(3), 196-209.

* Venezky, R. (1986). Steps toward a modern history of American reading instruction. In Rothkopf, E. (Ed.), *Review of research in education* (Vol. 13, pp. 129-162). Washington D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

* Walker, B. (1990). *Remedial Reading*. Washington D.C.: National Education Association.

Wood, K. & Algozzine, B. (1994). *Teaching Reading to High-Risk Learners*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE